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SUBJECT: Ankara Media Summary

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2009

In Today's Papers

Turkey and Armenia Agree on A Roadmap for Normalizing Relations
All papers: The Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) said in a statement late Wednesday night that Turkey and Armenia have agreed on a roadmap for normalizing relations and reconciliation. In its statement the MFA said "The two nations have made solid progress and have reached a mutual understanding to normalize ties according to a comprehensive framework that satisfies both sides. Within this framework, a roadmap has been determined." Mainstream Sabah reports that the roadmap is based on five steps for reconciliation: Armenia will recognize the Treaty of Kars signed between Turkey and Armenia in 1923, third countries will be allowed to join the commission to be formed by historians to examine allegations of genocide, the border crossing between the two countries will be opened, necessary agreements will be signed to boost commercial relations, the two countries will first accredit their Ambassadors in Tbilisi, then, they will appoint Ambassadors mutually and finally, the agreement about the road map will be submitted to the Turkish Parliament for approval. Mainstream Hurriyet reports "The opening of the border and establishment of diplomatic relations depends on the progress in the activities of commission established by the two countries to tackle genocide claims. Also, the steps to be undertaken by Armenia in Nagorno Karabagh will play an important role in bilateral ties."

Mainstream Sabah comments "The roadmap between Turkey and Armenia did not include steps for settlement in Nagorno Karabakh," but an unnamed government official is quoted as saying "There is a de facto understanding that, in order to achieve normalization between Turkey and Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh must be resolved in the same way as that finding a resolution to Cyprus is a de facto condition for Turkey's EU bid." Liberal Radikal also notes, "The step-by-step normalization" will "run parallel to steps regarding Karabakh." In a related article, mainstream Aksam reports, "Turkey now expects Armenia to state its respect for Turkish territorial integrity," and "steps toward establishing diplomatic relations in the two countries depends upon this."

Sabah reports that recent developments in Turkey-Armenia relations and the impact of it on Azerbaijan was high on agenda of the reception held at the parliament on the occasion of April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day. President Abdullah Gul said that he called Azeri President Aliyev to say that everything is being done according to the interests of Turkey and Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, at the same reception, PM Erdogan said "We will not take any steps to hurt our Azeri brothers," notes mainstream Vatan. Mainstream Milliyet notes PM Erdogan's comments saying "Details of the roadmap are not concrete yet," which has caused some to question the purpose of the accord. The paper reports that Erdogan will go to Azerbaijan on Monday to meet with Aliyev.

Obama not Likely to Use the 'G Word'

Mainstream Vatan headlines, "The Turkish Statement to Normalize Ties with Armenia Will Make U.S. President Obama Avoid the 'G Word.'" Zaman's Washington correspondent Ali Aslan writes "It's not likely that Obama will use the 'G word' because Obama is likely to be pleased by the agreement between Turkey and Armenia, but he also does not want to offend the Armenians in America, so he may use the term 'mass killings' or even 'ethnic cleansing.'" Far right Ortadoğu also concludes "Obama is not expected to say 'genocide'" as "concrete steps have been taken between Turkey and Armenia." Mainstream Milliyet, liberal Radikal, and Islamist-oriented Zaman all note in their headlines, "The U.S. Is Pleased," with the announcement.

Editorial Commentary on Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan

Okay Gonensin notes in mainstream Vatan: "The normalization of

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Turkey-Armenia ties is something the Russian Federation will not like, because the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia and their borders remaining closed make both countries dependent on Russia. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan know that under Turkey's auspices they will make important progress in opening up to the world. It's an important political success that Turkey will be on the lead in bringing peace to the Caucasus, even though this success will not relieve Turkey from the '1915 question.'"

Fikret Bila observes in mainstream Milliyet: "Diplomatic circles in Ankara believe the Baku administration is not uneasy as the Azerbaijani public is over the possibility of the opening of the border between Turkey and Armenia. President Aliyev is continuing contacts with Yerevan via the Minsk Group, and is working for the two processes to move forward in a way to support each other. Ankara, too, believes that if the two processes move parallel and support each other, the outcome will benefit the entire Caucasus."

Ferai Tinc comments in mainstream Hurriyet: "The U.S., especially, knows that normalization in the region is not possible without a resolution to the Karabakh question. Secretary Clinton assured the Azerbaijani government of U.S. support in resolving the Karabakh problem in Wednesday's hearing at the U.S. Congress, and American diplomats' visits to Armenia and Azerbaijan earlier this week was no coincidence. What matters is the creation of a context regarding normalization through informing the public -- the Turkish government must eliminate the question marks the opposition might have, just as Secretary Clinton did during her hearing at the US Congress. Otherwise, the 'roadmap' will mean nothing but another effort to dodge another April 24, which will be a pity."

Ali Aslan writes from Washington for the Islamist-oriented Zaman: "It seems unlikely that President Obama will mention the Armenian 'genocide' in his April 24 speech. Obama is not even expected to make an indirect reference to genocide, but there's a possibility that in order to not offend the Armenians, he might deliver a 'heavy' text by calling the events of 1915 'mass killings' or 'ethnic cleansing.'"

Erdal Safak comments in mainstream Sabah: "Normalization of the Turkey-Armenia relationship will give us ground to calmly debate the Armenians' 'genocide' charges. Both Turkey and Armenia must make good use of this ground, since both countries need to revitalize the

friendship they have lost."

Cengiz Candar writes in liberal Radikal: "Baku has toned down its reaction to the process between Turkey and Armenia, which gives us hope that the 'roadmap' between Ankara and Yerevan might work. The process will push for progress also on Karabakh as the processes between Turkey-Armenia and Azerbaijan-Armenia move parallel to each other."

Ali Akel writes from Washington for Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak: "The common opinion in Washington is that in his April 24 statement, President Obama will say everything without using the word 'genocide,' just like previous presidents who termed the events of 1915 as 'massacre.' If Obama doesn't say 'genocide,' the Armenian Genocide Resolution will not be raised again this year. Do you think the Turks and Armenians who stage demonstrations in front of the Turkish Embassy in Washington on April 24 could hold a 'solidarity demonstration' together? Such a likelihood, at least, sounds good."

Guneri Civaoglu writes in mainstream Milliyet: "President Obama is not expected to use the word 'genocide' on April 24, because now he has an ethical pretext which he can explain to the Armenian lobby in the U.S. Following Ankara, Yerevan made a similar statement on the normalization of ties, and Secretary Clinton stated she found this development 'positive.' Looks like the April 24 storm will pass quietly this year."

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Weapons Unearthed in Istanbul

Sabah, Zaman, Yeni Safak, Hurriyet: Today's papers report that ten people were detained in connection with the Ergenekon investigation. Security people unearthed weapons in Istanbul on land that belongs to the Istek Foundation. Sabah reports that four of the suspects were regular military officers from the military unit using the area for training. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that following the statement of Bedrettin Dalan, an Ergenekon suspect and the founder of Istek Foundation, said that "the excavated land is in a military zone and no one is allowed in there", the Turkish General Staff stated that "The military does not have any buried weapons."

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Eight people were injured in Hakkari during protests against recent operations targeting DTP. A 12 year old boy was rushed to the hospital after he was brutally beaten by a police officer.
- The Istanbul Governor rejects the request of labor unions for holding May 1 celebrations in Taksim.
- The government plans to offer temporary jobs to 500,000 people.

World

- 73 people were killed in two separate suicide attacks in Baghdad.
- The alleged leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Abu Omar Al- Baghdadi was detained after clashes with Iraqi soldiers.

JEFFREY